

Subject:	Standards Update		
Date of Meeting:	8th January 2019		
Report of:	Monitoring Officer		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Abraham Ghebre-Ghiorghis	Tel: 29-1500
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Ward(s) affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE**1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT**

- 1.1 This report seeks to update Members on Standards-related matters relevant to the Committee's remit.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the Audit & Standards Committee note the information provided in the report on member complaints and on standards-related matters.

3 MEMBER-RELATED COMPLAINTS**Complaints resolved since last Report**

- 3.1 The complaint referred to as 'complaint no 5' in the last update report has now been resolved informally, by a decision to take no further action.
- 3.2 That complaint process had to be suspended for a period of time for reasons outside the Council's control. Once it could be progressed, it was reviewed by both the Monitoring Officer and the council's Independent Person. They each reached the same view, namely that the conduct which was the subject of the complaint occurred when the relevant councillor was neither engaged in council business nor otherwise acting in their capacity as an elected member. As a result, it was not considered that the alleged conduct was capable of amounting to a breach of the Code and the complaint was determined accordingly, by a decision to take no further action.
- 3.3 Two other complaints were reported as outstanding in the last update report. The first of those alleged disrespectful conduct and further information was sought from the complainant in order to progress that complaint. Despite every opportunity being afforded to that individual no response was received. As a result, a decision was made to take no further action in relation to it.
- 3.4 The existence of a third outstanding complaint was noted in the last report. The detail of the allegations made merited a considered review. In this instance, the Independent Person indicated that detailed preliminary information would potentially be helpful to assist in the matter being reviewed at initial assessment stage. That process involved clarificatory information being sought from both the complainant and the member concerned. Having reviewed that information, the

Monitoring Officer concurred with the Independent Person that the evidence which the complainant described did not substantiate the complaints which were made. As a result it was not considered that if proven, the complaint would amount to a breach of the Code of Conduct for Members and it was moreover not considered to be in public interest to refer it for formal investigation.

3.5 The parties in all of the above matters have been notified of the outcome.

Complaints awaiting resolution

3.6 Three new complaints regarding member conduct have been received in since the last Update Report, one of which alleges misconduct by two members of the same political Group. Those complaints are each being individually progressed in accordance with the Council's Procedures, and the parties involved are being kept informed. This Committee will be kept informed of progress in relation to these outstanding complaints via the regular Update reports.

4 ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

4.1 The council is obliged under the Localism Act to make arrangements for maintaining high standards of conduct among members and to make arrangements for the investigation of complaints. The current arrangements and the proposals in this report reflect this. No alternative proposals are suggested.

5 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION

5.1 No requirement to consult with the local community has been identified.

6 CONCLUSION

6.1 Members are asked to note the contents of this report, which aims to assist the Committee in discharging its responsibilities for overseeing that high standards of conduct are maintained in a way which is compliant with local requirements.

7 FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

7.1 There are no additional financial implications arising from the recommendation in this report. All activity referred to has been and can be met from existing budgets and resources.

Finance Officer Consulted: Nigel Manvell

Date: 06/12/18

Legal Implications:

7.2 These are covered in the body of the report.

Lawyer Consulted: Victoria Simpson

Date: 19/12/18

Equalities Implications:

7.3 There are no equalities implications arising from this report.

Sustainability Implications:

7.4 There are no sustainability implications arising from this report.

Any Other Significant Implications:

7.5 None.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

None

Documents in Members' Rooms:

None

Background Documents:

None

